

# An Address

*Delivered by*

DR. JOHN DEWEY

*of Columbia University*

*at the Lincoln Birthday Dinner of the Abraham Lincoln Foundation, in the Commodore Hotel, Wednesday evening, February 12, 1930, launching the program to establish the Abraham Lincoln University. This international seat of learning, located in Westchester County, New York, will promote world understanding through education of promising youth from every race and creed, from every State of the Union and from every nation of the world.*

WE commemorate this evening, the birthday of our great leader, Abraham Lincoln. Although he was the guide of a distracted nation through a great war, it was his devotion to the cause of peace that has enshrined him in our hearts. The Abraham Lincoln Foundation, under whose auspices we meet, concluded its original statement of its purpose and plans, formulated and issued just one year ago today, with these words of Lincoln: "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. With malice toward none; with charity for all; let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to do all which may achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations." The "mighty scourge" to which he referred was the civil war then raging. But it was characteristic of the wisdom and vision of Lincoln that he took into his broad and sympathetic view more than that one war which was the immediate occasion of his address. A smaller man would have been completely occupied with the one life and death struggle which was being waged. The end to Lincoln was not victory and conquest, but the achieving of just and lasting peace, and the peace which he ardently desired was not only peace among ourselves but "with all nations."

"Let us strive on," he said, "to finish the work we are in." A narrow view would limit the meaning of these words to finishing the civil war. But truth to the spirit that animated Lincoln justifies us in saying that the work was not finished with the ending of the civil war; that we must still strive on to finish the work he was engaged in. That work and the need of consecration to it will not be ended until the scourge of war is permanently banished from the earth, and

until the spirit of peace dwells with all the nations of the earth.

Because the life of Lincoln was dedicated to this work of ensuring just and lasting peace among all nations, I can imagine nothing so appropriate to Lincoln's own magnanimous and far-reaching vision as the Abraham Lincoln Foundation devoted to the cause of ensuring mutual understanding among the peoples of the earth, and no way so open and so sure by which the Foundation can contribute to this end, as the institution of a University, Lincoln-minded in faculty and students, whose main purpose is by means of both informal contact and formal instruction, to promote international understanding and good-will.

We hear a great deal about the need of achieving mental disarmament. It is truly said that while material disarmament is important and in the present state of the world an economic necessity, yet it is of itself no guarantee of an enduring peace. Even though physical disarmament were carried through on land and sea with a completeness which is not contemplated, nations would still mobilize for war and improvise it with material means unless their minds, their habits of thought and desires, their purposes and attitudes in relation to one another were changed. That change can be produced only by education; for education alone fundamentally affects the thoughts and aspirations, the ideas and ideals of men. Education is not confined to schools, to special institutions. It is a wide and varied process. But in order that this education which goes on in society through all sorts of processes may be directed, in order that it may be unified in the direction of peace, there is need of an institution which shall devote itself supremely to the development of that mutual understanding without which mental dis-

armament cannot be made secure and without which the active and constructive will to peace cannot be made a reality. There is at present no such institution of wide-world scope. The Abraham Lincoln University proposes to fill the void. Think of these two facts, and you will, if you allow your mind to dwell upon them, have a vision which no words of mine, had I the eloquence of a great orator, could generate. You have in these facts the root of the whole matter; and if this idea takes root in your minds you will have within yourselves a light which will guide you through the many details that might otherwise be obscure and baffling.

I have for many years been a firm believer in the idea of the Outlawry of War—that idea which received its first practical consummation in the Kellogg Peace Pact; but I am true to that idea when I say about it what I have already said about disarmament. It is a great step forward to take war between nations out from under the protection of international law, to put the ban of law upon it, instead of as in the past giving war the sanction of law as a means of settling disputes among nations. But the most ardent believer in this movement, and none could well be more ardent than I am, must recognize that the ultimate issue is not settled. It all goes back to the public opinion and sentiment of the nations of the world. If they are educated to want peace, the Kellogg Pact - - - the Peace Pact, and other things that will follow in its wake, will be powerful instruments in the hands of the people for peace; if they are not so educated, it may in time of stress prove a broken reed upon which to depend, a reed made of paper. The great value of the Peace Pact as it stands is as an instrument of education rather than as a legal measure. If it is to do its educative work, it must be reinforced by an educated public opinion and a public leader-

ship resting upon international understanding. To the formation of this opinion and leadership the Abraham Lincoln University alone among all educational institutions now anywhere existing is exclusively dedicated.

The inspiring idea of promoting understanding with a view to an enduring and just peace among the nations of the world is, as I have said, central. It is the germ from which all else grows. But you will be interested in knowing what sort of growth is anticipated and is being planned for. The outlines of the picture can be presented in a brief time, for the picture itself is unified and commanding. A six years' course is contemplated, covering substantially a senior high school, the usual four years of college, and graduate work. This arrangement will secure such close dovetailing that the waste often incident from transfer to high school to college will be avoided. It will take pupils in their still impressionable years and carry them through to years that will be sufficiently mature so that impressions will be converted into enduring habits of mind. Each successive year 200 students will enter making a total of 1200. These will be selected on the basis of 80 from the United States, one from each state and territory of the Union, and the balance at large, and 120 from the other Nations of the world. The task of selecting the students will be facilitated by field agents who will be in contact with the proper authorities. The students will be selected on the basis of Lincoln-mindedness, with character as the first essential. Before the University opens, a faculty of some twenty-five will be selected and will be set free for a time to travel, inform themselves directly on international conditions, and for mutual conference. The curriculum will be determined by these conferences, subject only to the positive condition of all phases of it being concentrated on the unifying aim of promoting

international understanding, and the negative condition of being free from all deliberate indoctrination of special views and beliefs.

This is the outline in brief of the University at work. Even to begin to complete the picture, you have however to imagine the international interest that will be aroused by the preliminary selection of students, and by the effort to procure only students that show promise of real leadership. Then you have to envision the series of years ahead in which during every year, two hundred students trained to realize their promise of leadership, go forth into their respective communities, imbued with the understanding spirit of Abraham Lincoln. For six years they will have been systematically trained in knowledge of international questions and needs, with reference to the one great task of promoting universal peace by acting upon a common sympathetic understanding. Do not confine your view to the students while in residence at the University. Envision the constant succession of trained students going back into their own communities, and the constantly cumulative effect of their combined energies.

We owe this great vision to the insight and steady work of Mr. Roy Curtiss who for fifteen years and more has patiently matured the idea, before launching it upon a waiting world that needs this educational enterprise above all others. Some one else will speak of Lincoln as a world figure, but I cannot refrain from calling your especial attention to that flash of insight which saw that Lincoln was the one American figure which would attract to itself most readily the aspirations of the whole world for peace, and the figure about which American sentiment would most readily rally in making to the world this supreme donation of an educa-



tional enterprise in the cause of peace. Another speaker will tell you about the physical and financial details of the enterprise. Here too I cannot refrain from calling your attention to the fact that the financial campaign is in the spirit of Lincoln; it is of, for and by the people. Moreover, the plan for grounds and buildings are such as will ensure that personal contact and understanding for which the life and work of Lincoln so pre-eminently stands.

In closing I want to congratulate you who are here and others interested who are not here in having a share in the initiation of this great, this magnificent, educational enterprise; an undertaking that is, in my best judgment, as sound, as practical, as it is magnificent in its conception and its consequences. It is a plan to set the imagination on fire. Its realization will bring results far beyond those which our present imagination can encompass.

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